

SOUTHEAST ALASKA PURSE SEINE FISHERY  
MANAGEMENT PLAN, 1991



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Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Commercial Fisheries Division  
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## INTRODUCTION

This plan describes how the 1991 Southeast Alaska salmon purse seine fishery will be managed and discusses expected run sizes, harvest strategies, and related management issues. The plan is based on the 1991 preseason pink salmon forecast and on historical escapement and fishery performance information. Staff biologists listed at the end of the document are available to provide further details regarding its implementation in their respective areas.

Regulations allow purse seine fishing in Districts 1 (Sections 1-C, 1-D, 1-E, and 1-F only), 2, 3 (Sections 3-A, 3-B and 3-C), 4, 5, 6, 7 (Sections 7-A and 7-B), 9 (Sections 9-A and 9-B), 10, 11 (Sections 11-A and 11-D only), 12 (Sections 12-A and 12-B), 13 (Sections 13-A, 13-B and 13-C), and 14 (Sections 14-A, 14-B and 14-C). Existing regulations also allow purse seining in terminal hatchery fishing areas at Nakat Inlet, Carroll Inlet, Neets Bay, Eastern Passage, and Hidden Falls. Although the areas specified above are generally open to seine fishing, regulations also mandate that the specific open areas and fishing periods are to be established by department emergency order.

The purse seine fishery normally accounts for between 70% and 90% of the total commercial salmon harvest in the Southeast Alaska region. Pink salmon are the primary species targeted by the seine fleet, hence management actions are based primarily on the abundance of pink salmon stocks. Other species are generally harvested incidental to pink salmon. On average, sockeye and coho salmon account for approximately 2%, chum salmon 7%, and chinook salmon less than 1%, of the total purse seine salmon harvest.

Adult tagging studies have demonstrated that pink salmon stocks in Southeast Alaska exhibit a distinct separation between the northern and southern portions of the region. For purposes of forecasting, catch tabulation, and management, Districts 1 through 8 are grouped as "southern Southeast" and Districts 9 through 14 as "northern Southeast". In general, management of the northern and southern area purse seine fisheries is independent.

In-season assessments of pink salmon run strength are determined primarily from spawning escapement information obtained from aerial surveys of sanctuary areas and streams, and from fishery performance data based on catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE). In addition, the department often charts purse seine vessels to conduct test fishing assessments of run strength in selected areas.

### ***1991 Pink Salmon Forecast***

A pink salmon run of 98,100,000 fish is forecast for Southeast Alaska in 1991. Subtracting the overall escapement goal of 30,800,000 from the forecasted run results in a forecasted total harvest of 67,300,000 pink salmon (includes 1,200,000 from hatchery production). If the run materializes at this level, the harvest potential in Southeast Alaska would exceed the average annual harvest of pink salmon for the entire state during the 1980's; a period of record pink salmon production.

It is recognized, however, that department forecasts of pink salmon returns to Southeast Alaska have been extremely inaccurate over the past several years. After examining recent forecast errors and catch trends, it appears that the 1991 forecast may be unrealistically high. For example, a time-series based analysis of historical Southeast Alaska pink salmon harvests results in an estimated harvest of only 28,000,000 fish (range = 16,000,000 to 50,000,000) compared to the forecasted catch of 67,300,000. A weighted average of these two projections results in a projected harvest of 45,000,000. This value is well within the ranges of both methods and may be more realistic.

### **GENERAL MANAGEMENT GOALS**

The primary management goals for the 1991 Southeast Alaska purse seine fishery are as follows:

1. Obtain overall pink and chum salmon spawning escapement goals with the best possible distribution to all systems.
2. Provide for an orderly fishery while harvesting those fish in excess of spawning escapement needs.
3. Minimize, to the extent possible, the interceptions of salmon destined for those fishing districts where weak returns are expected.
4. Promote a harvest of good quality fish within constraints dictated by run size and timing.
5. Manage the District 4 purse seine fishery consistent with the provisions of the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty.
6. Manage for a catch of chinook salmon (28 inches or larger) of 11,400 fish, exclusive of new Alaskan hatchery-produced fish.

7. Manage the seine fishery in the waters of District 12, north of Point Marsden (along the Hawk Inlet shore), consistent with the Northern Southeast Purse Seine Management Plan specified by regulation.

### **GENERAL MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS**

Prices paid for pink salmon during the 1991 season may be lower than in previous years due to anticipated large pink salmon returns to Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, and Kodiak. In addition, if the pink salmon returns develop as predicted, there are concerns that existing fish processing capacity may not be adequate to process pink salmon harvests in an orderly and efficient manner during periods of large purse seine catches. Over the past several months, department staff have met with purse seine fishermen and representatives of the processing industry to discuss ways to alleviate some of the problems that may result from large returns, low prices, and inadequate processing capacity. Industry representatives have recommended that the department not extend fishery openings beyond the normal two-day-on/two-day-off fishing schedule; in previous years of large pink salmon returns the department extended openings from two days to three or four days. Industry maintains that fewer pink salmon will actually be harvested and fish quality will be lower during a three or four-day consecutive fishing schedule than during a normal two-day-on, two-day-off fishing schedule. Purse seine fishermen and processing companies have also expressed concerns regarding the possible harvest of poor quality summer chum salmon returns at the Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association's (NSRAA) Hidden Falls Hatchery, and in Tenakee Inlet in District 12. Ways of improving fish quality in these areas are discussed to a greater extent in the "Northern Districts" section of this management plan.

The department recognizes and appreciates the concerns expressed by the processing industry and purse seine fishermen regarding fish quality and processing capacity during the coming season and will attempt to alleviate these problems to the extent possible. For example, due to the extremely large 1991 pink salmon forecast for Southeast Alaska, the department intends to adopt a more aggressive fishing schedule early in the season in areas where strong returns are expected. In addition, a two-day-on and two-day-off fishing schedule is also desirable from the department's perspective because it allows for orderly tabulation and analysis of fish ticket and escapement data during the season. Still, there may be periods during the season when pink salmon abundance in some areas warrants extensions of fishing time beyond the normal fishing schedule.

## **CHINOOK SALMON HARVEST**

Existing regulations require the department to manage the Southeast Alaska purse seine fishery for a harvest of 11,400 chinook salmon (not including Alaska hatchery-produced fish). The Board of Fisheries adopted this regulation as part of an overall allocation scheme among commercial users that were impacted by chinook salmon harvest quotas imposed by the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST). In addition, the Board adopted chinook salmon size limits, and directed the department to manage the purse seine fishery so that incidental mortality from catch and release is minimized. Specific provisions for management of the seine fishery harvest of chinook salmon are as follows:

1. The seasonal purse seine catch limit will be 11,400 chinook salmon (excluding Alaska hatchery chinook salmon).
2. Only chinook salmon 28 inches in length or larger (as measured from tip of snout to tip of tail) will count against the purse seine catch limit.
3. Non-retention of 28-inch and larger chinook salmon will be the primary management measure for maintaining the catch limit. Chinook salmon non-retention will be required early in the season when total salmon catch rates are low. This will allow more efficient release of chinook salmon and minimize the impact of incidental mortality. Retention of chinook salmon will be permitted for as long as possible during the time period when the catch rate for other species is high. Once the quota is obtained, non-retention regulations will once again be required.
4. Purse seine fishermen may not sell chinook salmon 21-28 inches long. Fishermen are encouraged to avoid areas that contain concentrations of chinook salmon within this size range and to quickly release those which are caught to minimize mortality.
5. Purse seine fishermen may possess and sell chinook salmon that are less than 21 inches (approximately 5 lbs. or less); however, they will not count against the catch limit.

### ***Implementation Plan***

Purse seine fishermen can anticipate periods of non-retention of chinook salmon (28 inches or longer) during openings through most of July. Following the early season non-retention period, they will be allowed to retain chinook salmon 28 inches, or longer until the catch limit is obtained. This retention period is expected to be of short duration and will be announced via department news release.

During periods of non-retention, fishermen are encouraged to avoid fishing areas with high concentrations of chinook salmon and to quickly release those caught in a manner that minimizes mortality. To ensure that small (less than 21 inch) chinook are not counted against the quota, the department needs the cooperation of the fishing industry. To accomplish this, the department will require that all chinook salmon sold that are 28 inches or longer be specified on fish tickets as species 410; this is pre-printed on each fish ticket. Chinook salmon 21 inches or shorter should be indicated on fish tickets as species 411. This code will need to be noted on the fish ticket at the time of sale because the code is not pre-printed.

## **SOUTHERN DISTRICTS PURSE SEINE FISHERY**

### ***1991 Pink Salmon Forecast***

Parent-year pink salmon escapements exceeded escapement goals in Districts 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7. Overall, the distribution of escapements was very good, with no apparent weaknesses in any of these districts. Escapements to District 5, however, were slightly below goals. A majority of the 1991 pink salmon return should be produced from pink salmon stocks returning to streams in Districts 1, 2, and 3; pink salmon runs in Districts 5 through 7 should have sufficient strength to allow limited seine fishing opportunity.

### ***Management Problems***

Escapements of sockeye salmon to Hugh Smith Lake in Boca de Quadra have been below escapement goals in recent years. Preliminary tagging information indicates that exploitation rates may be higher than this stock can support. Management strategies for reducing exploitation rates on Hugh Smith sockeye are currently being discussed among department staff and industry representatives from both the seine and gill net fleets.

## ***Management Plan***

The overall management for the southern districts' purse seine fishery consists of separate segments for the outside fishery in District 4, the inside pink salmon, the McDonald Lake sockeye salmon, the fall chum salmon, and the terminal area hatchery fisheries.

### **District 4**

The District 4 salmon purse seine fishery will be managed under provisions of the four-year Annex to the PST for the northern boundary area (Southeast Alaska and northern British Columbia). This Annex requires that the District 4 fishery be managed during the period from 1990 through 1993 such that the maximum four-year total harvest of sockeye prior to statistical week 31 (July 28 through August 3 in 1991) does not exceed 480,000 fish. In addition, the Annex specifies that when the catch of sockeye salmon in a given year reaches 160,000, no further daily fishing periods will be allowed prior to statistical week 31. All underages, not to exceed 20% of the Annex ceiling, will be added, and any overages subtracted, from the subsequent four-year period.

During the 1990 PST period, approximately 170,000 sockeye salmon were harvested leaving 310,000 fish to be harvested during the remaining three years of the District 4 PST Annex. The department will attempt to spread the harvest of the remaining sockeye salmon quota evenly across the next three years and will manage for a harvest of approximately 100,000 sockeye salmon per year from 1991 through 1993. Due to the alignment of statistical weeks, the 1991 PST period will be three weeks, compared to four statistical weeks during the 1990 season.

The 1991 season opening date for District 4 is Sunday, July 7. The initial open period will be 15-hours. Additional fishing time during the next two weeks will be based on the availability of sockeye salmon and the need to spread the harvest of 310,000 over the next three years. Fishermen should anticipate time and area restrictions in District 4 if the harvest approaches the in-season goal of 100,000. The conservation of local Alaskan sockeye salmon stocks will also be considered when establishing fishing time.

Beginning the week of July 28 and continuing until District 4 is closed, purse seine management will be based on the magnitude of the pink salmon returns to the inside fishing districts, and the need to harvest a portion of the returns in District 4. During this period, purse seine fishing time in District 4 should not be expected to be more than that allowed for the inside fishing districts. If returns to inside districts develop below what is needed to meet spawning escapement needs, it may be necessary to curtail fishing time in the District 4 fishery.



## **Inside Water Pink Salmon Fishery**

Intensive aerial surveys of early pink salmon producing areas, primarily Boca de Quadra, east Behm Canal, and Ernest Sound will begin in late June and early July.

Seining in inside waters is expected to begin on Sunday, July 7. The initial fishing period will be for 15 hours and will be confined to the southeast portion of Section 1-F. The southernmost section of District 2, south of Scott Point, is expected to initially open during the second week of the season.

During the March 1991 Board of Fisheries meeting, a regulation was adopted that requires a purse seine net to be aboard the vessel before entering Section 1-B; the Tree Point drift gill net area. This regulation was passed by the Board of Fisheries to minimize gear conflicts between purse seine and drift gill net gear at the "Foggy Point" line.

A conservative management approach will be followed for Clarence Strait in 1991. As in recent years, seining will be limited to the southern portion of District 2 until escapements of pink salmon to northern Clarence Strait, Ernest Sound, west Behm Canal, Cholmondeley Sound, and Kasaan Bay can be assessed. Additionally, no seining should be expected in middle Clarence Strait, along Ship Island and the Tolstoi Shores, until it can be assured that pink salmon spawning escapement goals will be obtained in Districts 6 and 7.

Returns of pink salmon to District 3 are expected to be very good due to above average escapements to all portions of the district in the parent year. If the pink salmon run materializes as anticipated, purse seine fishing may begin in the district as early as late July.

## **McDonald Lake Sockeye**

The department will monitor the sockeye salmon return to McDonald Lake beginning in early July by aerial surveys and test fishing. If an identifiable surplus of sockeye salmon is evident, a limited seine fishery in the immediate vicinity of Yes Bay will be allowed during mid-July to early August. If a fishery is authorized, the opening will be in conjunction with other seine openings and will probably be of short duration to minimize impacts on other stocks. It is estimated that the total adult return to McDonald Lake could range as high as 150,000. Harvest rates in recent years for the net fisheries have ranged from 16% to 59% of the total return. The sockeye escapement goal for McDonald Lake is 85,000.

## **Fall Chum Fisheries**

Some watersheds along the east coast of Prince of Wales Island, in District 2, produce late-run chum salmon that have traditionally supported fall purse seine fisheries. Although no formal forecasts are available for these returns, some expectations can be based on parent year escapements. In the 1987 parent year, fall chum salmon escapements were slightly below average in Disappearance Creek, and well above average in Lagoon Creek, the primary spawning streams in Cholmondeley Sound. Chum salmon escapements were average for the Karta River in Kasaan Bay. Fishermen can expect the first openings on approximately September 10.

## **Terminal Hatchery Fisheries**

For the 1991 season, special harvest area seine fisheries can be expected at Nakat Inlet and Eastern Passage to harvest fish returning to Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA) enhancement facilities. Additionally, seining may occur in the Klawock Inlet terminal area to harvest coho and chum salmon returning to the State operated Klawock Hatchery. No common property seine fisheries are expected for the Neets Bay or Carroll Inlet terminal areas in 1991.

The fisheries in Nakat Inlet and Eastern Passage (Earl West Cove) will be managed jointly with SSRAA, and in accordance with Board of Fisheries management plans. The open areas and tentative fishing times will be follows:

- 1) **Nakat Inlet:** The waters of Nakat Inlet between 54°50' N. latitude and 54°56' N. latitude, are tentatively scheduled to be open from 6:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m. on the following dates:

Sunday, July 21  
Friday, July 26  
Wednesday, July 31  
Monday, August 5  
Saturday, August 10  
Thursday, August 15  
Tuesday, August 20  
Sunday, August 25  
Friday, August 30  
Wednesday, September 4  
Monday, September 9  
Saturday, September 14  
Thursday, September 19

Tuesday, September 24

Sunday, September 29

Friday, October 4

Wednesday, October 9

- 2) **Eastern Passage:** The waters of Eastern Passage south of 56°24'50" N latitude and west of 132°06'21" W. longitude, with all waters of Madan Bay east of a line from the latitude of the channel marker in the narrows to the eastern tip of Channel Island (56°21'48" N. latitude, 132°09'24" W. longitude) to the navigational light on the northern tip of Channel Island to the southernmost tip of Point Madan (56°22'39" N. latitude, 132°09'42" W. longitude) are tentatively scheduled to be open from 6:00 a.m. through 6:00 p.m. on the following dates:

Saturday, June 22

Thursday, June 27

Sunday, June 30

Wednesday, July 3

Saturday, July 6

Tuesday, July 9

Friday, July 12

Monday, July 15

Thursday, July 18

Sunday, July 21

Wednesday, July 24

Saturday, July 27

Tuesday, July 30

Friday, August 2

Monday, August 5

Thursday, August 8

Sunday, August 11

Wednesday, August 14

Saturday, August 17

Tuesday, August 20

Friday, August 23

Monday, August 26

Thursday, August 29

Monday, September 2

Saturday, September 7

Thursday, September 12

Tuesday, September 17

Sunday, September 22  
Friday, September 27  
Wednesday, October 2  
Monday, October 7

Fishermen are cautioned that the above schedules are tentative and subject to change. They should check with the department or SSRAA, prior to fishing to obtain updated fishery information. Fishermen are also requested to ensure that fish caught in terminal fisheries are reported correctly on the fish tickets. This will enable the accurate documentation of fish taken from the special harvest areas, and allow area-specific catch sampling to determine contributions rates based on recovery of coded micro-wire tags.

## **NORTHERN DISTRICTS PURSE SEINE FISHERY**

### ***1991 Forecast***

Parent-year (1989) pink salmon spawning escapement goals were achieved in Districts 9, 10, and 12 and Section 13-C and good returns are expected to most streams in these areas. Spawning escapements were variable in Districts 11, 14, and 15 and harvestable surpluses returning to portions of these districts may be limited. Poor spawning escapements to the outside portions of District 13, Sections 13-A and 13-B are expected to result in poor returns in 1991.

### ***Management Problems***

An early season management concern will be to prevent excessive interception of weak salmon stocks in mixed stock fishing corridors (e.g., Icy Straits and upper Chatham Straits) until run strengths to near-terminal and terminal areas can be adequately assessed.

## ***Management Plan***

The northern area purse seine fishery management plan consists of separate segments for the outside areas of Sections 13-A and 13-B, the inside areas, the fall chum salmon fishery, and the Hidden Falls hatchery terminal fishery.

### **Inside Fishing Areas**

The 1991 seining season will begin on Sunday, June 30, with an initial open period of 15 hours. Directed seining for pink salmon will initially be liberal in those terminal areas where strong returns are anticipated. During the first open periods on June 30 and July 7, seining will be allowed in most of District 10, portions of District 12 in Tenakee Inlet, and at Hidden Falls. Areas open to purse seining in Tenakee Inlet will depend on assessments of local chum salmon run strength. Port Frederick in District 14 (Section 14-B) will also be open on June 30 and July 7 to allow for the harvest of an expected surplus of chum salmon.

Openings to harvest summer chum salmon can also be expected in portions of Peril Strait (Section 13-C) and Kelp Bay. Subsequent seining for early run returns will depend on observed run strengths. Aerial surveys, to evaluate incoming pink salmon run strength, are expected to begin in early July for the northern inside fishing districts. Pink salmon catch rates in the Cross Sound troll fishery will also be monitored closely as an additional indicator of pink salmon run strength.

By late July, middle and late-run pink salmon returns should begin entering the inside waters of the northern districts. Seining is expected to begin in District 9 during late July along the Admiralty Island shore in Section 9-B. Seining should not be expected in the Kuiu Island fisheries of Section 9-B until early August. Poor overall pink salmon returns are expected to the lower Baranof Island shoreline in Section 9-A, hence no general purse seine openings are expected there until the run strength can be assessed.

Seining in District 12 (Chatham Strait) will expand in late July as the middle runs develop. The Whitestone Shore area in District 14 will open in mid-July with fishing times and areas corresponding to the observed strengths of local stocks. The Homeshore area in District 14 will be opened for short periods in mid-August to allow the harvest of pink salmon adjacent to Excursion Inlet. The short openings will be designed to minimize the harvest of non-local salmon stocks.

## **Hawk Inlet Shore Fishery**

The Admiralty Island shoreline between Funter Bay and Point Marsden in Chatham Strait is known as the Hawk Inlet Shore. Fishing is allowed in this area to harvest pink salmon stocks migrating northward to Lynn Canal and upper Stephens Passage (primarily the Taku River). During July, the department will manage the Hawk Inlet Shore in accordance with 5AAC 33.366. NORTHERN SOUTHEAST SEINE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN. This management plan stipulates that any portion of the area may be open when a harvestable surplus of pink salmon is observed. Openings must also consider the conservation of all species, and the area must be closed during July after 15,000 sockeye salmon are harvested. Purse seine fisherman are advised that openings in this area may be announced on short (24-hour) notice to target fishing effort during times when north-migrating pink salmon stocks are most abundant. Openings in adjacent areas may be restricted to allow accurate accounting of the sockeye salmon quota.

A harvestable surplus of pink salmon returning to the Taku River is expected to be available in the Hawk Inlet Shore area in early July. Based on recent "odd-year" run timing, the first purse seine opening will likely occur sometime between June 30 and July 7. Subsequent openings prior to mid-July will be determined by the abundance of Taku River pink salmon in the Hawk Inlet Shore area, and pink salmon catch rates in the District 11 drift gill net fishery. Purse seine openings along the Hawk Inlet shore after mid-July will be based on 1) assessments of abundance of other northbound pink salmon stocks in the upper Stephens Passage and Lynn Canal areas, 2) the strength of pink salmon returns to the Douglas Island Pink and Chum Hatchery (DIPAC), and 3) the 15,000 sockeye salmon catch limit. During August, openings along the Hawk Inlet Shore may extend northward to the latitude of Hanus Reef Light when northbound pink salmon strength warrants. In addition, if northbound pink salmon returns are poor and southbound stocks are strong, seining may only be allowed south of Point Marsden.

## **Hidden Falls Terminal Hatchery Fishery**

The Hidden Falls Hatchery, operated by the Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (NSRAA), expects a total chum salmon return of approximately 680,000 fish. Approximately 400,000 chum salmon will be available for common property harvest in 1991. Openings in the terminal harvest area will occur on June 30 and July 7. Further openings will depend on cost recovery and broodstock needs for the hatchery. Fishermen are advised that openings after July 7 at Hidden Falls may be announced on a 24-hour notice.

## **Fall Chum Salmon Fisheries**

Portions of the northern fishing districts support distinct returns of fall-run chum salmon which are harvested by purse seine gear. No formal forecasts are available for these runs. Parent year (1987) fall chum salmon escapements were generally good and good fall fishing is expected. Areas expected to be open include Port Camden, Security Bay and Excursion Inlet. Fall fisheries will be managed on the basis of visual observations of run strengths in the bays beginning in mid-August and continuing through September.

## **Outside Fishing Areas (Sections 13-A and 13-B)**

Management of Sections 13-A and 13-B, along the outer coastal areas of Baranof and Chichagof Islands, is distinct from the management of the northern inside fishing areas. Pink salmon returning to streams in Sections 13-A and 13-B appear to enter directly from the ocean and do not pass through major inside migration corridors.

Poor overall pink salmon returns are expected to the outer coastal fishing areas and no general seining is expected until run strengths can be determined. Aerial and vessel surveys will begin in early July. Although poor overall returns are expected, a notable exception may be for returns to Slocum Arm, where parent year spawning escapements were good. Pending observation of run strength, limited seining could begin there as early as the last week of July.

Summer chum salmon returns will be monitored to determine run strengths beginning in early July. If harvestable surpluses can be identified, fishermen can expect portions of Sections 13-A and 13-B to be open by early to mid-July. Openings can be expected in Slocum Arm, West Crawfish Inlet, Portlock Harbor, and Whale Bay.

No directed fisheries on chum salmon returning to the NSRAA Deep Inlet Special Harvest Area (SHA) in Sitka Sound should be expected because the entire run will likely be needed for cost recovery. Any purse seining in the vicinity of these facilities will be based on the need to harvest local pink salmon stocks. In the event surpluses are available, they will be addressed via the Deep Inlet Management Plan that was adopted by the Board of Fisheries during its 1991 meeting. The plan provides for the distribution of the harvest of hatchery-produced chum salmon in the Deep Inlet SHA between the purse seine and drift gill net fleets. Openings for purse seines and gill nets will be rotated between net gear groups with a closure between openings to be determined by NSRAA and the department. The ratio of gill net fishing time to purse seine fishing time will be 2 to 1.

Short purse seine openings to harvest sockeye salmon along the outer coast of lower Baranof Island are expected to occur from mid-July to early August. These fisheries will be targeted on sockeye salmon returning to Necker Bay and Redfish Bay.



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The following is a list of telephone numbers that may be called during the fishing season to obtain recorded announcements concerning areas open to purse seine fishing:

Ketchikan	-	(907) 225-6870
Petersburg	-	(907) 772-3700
Sitka	-	(907) 747-5022
Juneau	-	(907) 586-3505

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